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Social Policy and Religious Relations in Contemporary Russia: Problems and Perspectives

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Executive Summary

Russia is in a rather difficult situation concerning the freedom of worship. Foreign experts put it in the list of countries with "the discriminating legislation or preconceived policy which causes detriment to certain religions, though the government's activities are in accordance with the Constitution"¹.

Thus, it is necessary to elaborate recommendations for the authorities to conduct state social policy not contradicting the Constitutions, international rights and freedoms, and for members of the Russian Orthodox Church, for "traditional" and "non-traditional" confessions acting in Russia to overcome negative results of national and religious intolerance.

For the Executive and Legislative Authorities of the Russian Federation:

- First of all, it is necessary to prove the unity of the state by curbing the religious (orthodox) fundamentalism through the key spheres – religious tolerance and social values.
- The analysis of the legislation shows a serious disparity between it and the real situation at the religious sphere. So, it needs to change the existing norms provoking the discrimination between confessions or on the basis of their "traditionalism – non-traditionalism".
- All around Russia in every social institute (family, educational establishment and so on) to declare secular values, based on the principles of freedom and equality. It concerns especially the institutes of socializations and interiorisation of the rising generation. We need to stop the joining of the state and the church, and the church with school, because religious world viewing with its mystique and myths is not combined with the scientific knowledge.
- The purpose of such education is to acquaint people with religions of Russia and neighboring states to help them to realize that all people have an equal right to believe in the verity of their religion, and that other people, different by their confessions, are actually just the same human beings.

For the Russian Orthodox Church (the ROC):

- In Russia the Orthodox fundamentalism is the most dangerous. It takes the political forms of archaic and extreme content and can change the whole political culture, therefore, the ideology of the state social policy.
- As far as the ROC is the most influent power in today's Russian social and political situation, it is very important whether it will be able to overcome its own ambitions and to put a line between the Church and Fundamentalism, not falling into the "political sectarianism".
- The ROC must declare in public open attitude of the Church to the modern society, free from any chauvinistic reminiscent.

¹ See: <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2005/11/09/493601.shtml>

For all other confessions acting in Russia:

- As long as many confessions have rather wide judicial practice (due to often trials) including international experience (by foreign missionaries) it is necessary to participate in development of the legislative initiatives directed to bringing the Russian legislation to the highest European and world standards in the sphere of freedom of worship and to monitor regularly law drafts and international pacts of Russia.

1 Problems in the Government – Public – Religious Communities Relationships

1.1 *The General Framework*

During the past 15-20 years an interest to religion significantly arose in Russia. Some researchers are discussing so called "Russian idea" that is connected, in their view, with a deep need of Russian soul in some kind of transcendental and sacral sense of existence. That is why we can encounter now an opinion that some degree of religious fundamentalism is intrinsic for psychology and conscience of Russian people.

However, this interest to ecclesiastical issues is accompanied mainly by the formal religiosity of people. We can presuppose that this ambivalence is a result of profound crisis that is being undergone by Russian society and affecting all the spheres of social life, including the field of religious relations.

Since the 90th of the last century the new social framework is being created in Russia. This new political system was supposed to guarantee all universal human rights, including the right of worship. The Constitution of the Russian Federation affirms that "no one ideology can be introduced as an official or obligatory one" (Item 13, 1993); "Russian Federation – is a secular society. No one religion can be established as an official or obligatory one" (Item 14). As a matter of fact this document provided legislative background for further proliferation of democratic principles of liberty and equality. Probably the first time in 1000 years of Russian history democracy eventually had got a chance to replace either confessional absolutism or atheistic totalitarianism.

Today, after twenty years of liberal reforms one can observe the paradoxical things in Russia: the vast majority of population is deprived of all country's resources, bureaucratic capitalism is developed here in its worst form, many democratic institutions (like election of governors in regions) are abolished, and, finally, political elite hand in hand with the Orthodox clergy are doing their best to turn the Russian Orthodox religion

into a kind of official Russian ideology, thus finishing the remains of democratic practices, ideas, and hopes off. Of course, it is not legal (yet), it is contradictory with the Constitution (yet), and with the common sense (yet), and it is being discussed to a degree in academic circles². Nevertheless this tendency proved to be steady and highly purposeful, while everything that is being considered as obstacles to its "sustainable development" is blamed publicly, and discriminated juristically and spiritually.

1.2 *The Legislative Issues*

It is paradoxical, but the former "Law on Freedom of Religion", which was enacted yet in the USSR in 1990 was much more democratic and liberal in comparison with the acting Russian "Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations" (1997). That soviet Law provided the citizens with vast rights to chose religion and to worship.³ The ecclesiastical field, or if we put it in the Orthodox terms, "ecumenical territory" had been quickly filled in with various religious organizations, thus challenging the traditional spiritual monopoly of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is natural enough, that the latter started to defend its "territory", employing for this purpose among other things its strong ties with the authorities, both local and federal, and media.⁴

In terms of democratic practice some statements of the acting Law sound rather questionably. The most obvious contradictions are as follows: - in the Law's preamble "the very special role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the history of Russia, and in development of her spirituality and culture" is acknowledged, at the same time the same Law prohibits "any propaganda of religious superiority" (Item 3, 1997); - the possibility to register or re-register religious organization is severely limited by the "fifteen years" rule, according to which a religious organization can be officially registered only after it is able to document its existence in Russia for not less then fifteen years (Item 11, 1999 following a review of the 1997 Law by the Constitutional Court).

² See: Дмитриев Ю.А., Дозорцев П.Н. Свобода совести на новом этапе правового обеспечения // Юрист. – 1998. - № 8; Тагиева Т.Ю. Российское законодательство о свободе совести и о религиозных объединениях: перспективы развития и реализации // Российский юридический журнал. – 1999. - № 1; Красиков А. Возрождение религии и рождение демократии? // Конституционное право: Восточноевропейское обозрение. – 2000. - № 2.

³ О свободе вероисповеданий: Закон РСФСР от 25.10.90. // Ведомости Съезда народных депутатов РСФСР и Верховного Совета РСФСР. – 1990. - № 21, ст. 240.

⁴ See, for example: Русский дом // Телевизионные передачи А. Егорцева. – 1997-1998 гг.; телевизионные передачи «Глазами младенца» и «Акунаматата» (1997-1998 гг.); Проблемы деструктивных культов и способы защиты подростков и молодежи от психологического насилия и зависимости // Учебный семинар. Иркутск. – 2000, 28 февраля - 2 марта; Духовная безопасность жителей Иркутской области // Учебный семинар. Иркутск. – 2004, 25 ноября.

The "fifteen years" rule embarrassed representatives of new religious movements in Russia⁵. They lodged a lot of complaints to the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, where pointed at the discrepancies between some of the items of the Law in question and the Constitution of Russia, what restrict in fact the freedom of conscience and the right of worship.

Thus, in expert view this Law enacted in autumn 1997, breached 16 items of the Constitution of RF, and at least three international treaties signed by Russia, concerning mainly human rights and liberties⁶.

Another contradiction is, so to say, of terminological descent. What do they mean by sentence "propaganda of religious superiority"? How can we discern "propaganda" from what is one of the main purposes of any religion – missionary activity? Do they mean inadmissibility of proliferation of religious ideas among the adherents of other confessions? But according to the same Law, religious group is an association of citizens, consolidated in purpose of "joint worship and proliferation of their belief" (Items 7-8). Where are the precise distinctions between "propaganda" (proselytism) and "proliferation"?

New Law put an end to long confrontation between so called "traditional" and "nontraditional" religions in Russia. The latter lost. According to this Law, the Russian citizens wishing to organize religious association, in case they are adherents of traditional religion, acquire the rights to possess property of any kind (Item 21), besides of tax exemption their organization may apply for financial donations from the Federal Government (Item 4), may ask to proclaim their religious holydays to be the days off (Item 4), may ask for postponement of army service for their clergy (Item 3), may establish educational organizations (Item 5). Nothing of this sort is allowed to religious groups which are not able to document their existence in Russia for not less than fifteen years, i.e. – to "nontraditional" religions.

All amendments that were made to the Law in question till the middle of 2004 were substantiated in very simple way: there is a necessity "to protect Russian society from various extremist religious organizations and missionaries", "to protect Russian citizens from totalitarian sects and destructive cults". Thus, majority of the "new religious movements" were assailed even without any serious analysis of their dogmas and activity.

⁵ See: Христианская Ассоциация «Харизма» // Харизма новости. – 1998. - № 3(4), С. 8; Соловьева Л. О правах верующих в России // Слово Жизни. Иркутск. – 1998. - № 5(1), февраль, С. 26-27.

⁶ See: Красиков А. Конституционный суд и свобода совести в России // Конституционное право:

2 The Troubles and Concerns

The so called "anti-sect" seminars are conducted under the auspices of the Orthodox Church annually in each region of Russia, for many non-Orthodox confessions and denominations to be at the endless suits on prohibition of registration or re-registration is already a common practice, the buildings of civil purpose (kinder gardens, libraries, planetaria, etc) are being returned to the so called "legal owners" – the Orthodox communities.

Archbishop of Irkutsk - Vadim in his recent public speech expressed negative view towards the "proselytizing activity" of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia in general, and in Siberia in particular. Archbishop appealed to the fact that in its time there was concluded an agreement between Vatican and Byzantium, according to which an "ecumenical territory" was divided, and since those times no one Church had right to break this "treaty", i.e. to cross the line. All the pathos of this sentence was about the fact, that, in a view of archbishop, the Roman Catholics recently treacherously breached this bilateral agreement, building now the Catholic temples in Siberia, and revitalizing the Catholic communities here. For me it sounds like a talk about a convention on zones of influences, on which some mobs agreed, rather than the candid concern about problem of ecclesiastical relationships, or a search for eternal truth and blessing.

According to the data of the Slavic Centre for Law and Justice⁷, only during the first four months of 2005 the number of various persecutions, oppressions, breaching of believers' rights reached the number of the same incidents committed during two previous years (2003, 2004) together. Incidents that include attempts to confiscate buildings (churches and temples), arsons and blowing up of worship places, assailments and insulting of representatives of different Protestant organizations and their clergymen from the side of as fanatic groups, as policemen took place in 2005 in cities: Moscow, Tula, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Podolsk, Tyumen, Krasnodar, Izhevsk, and Balashikha. As a rule, the suits on such events do not have any serious effect. Thus, in these circumstances we can talk about purposeful and steady persecution of "nontraditional" churches in Russia.

The "Conception of the National Religious Policy of the Russian Federation"⁸ says that the State considers as threats to national security, social stability and human rights

Восточноевропейское обозрение. – 2000. № 1.

⁷ <http://www.rinfo.ru>

⁸ The Conception was issued in 2004 by the Department of Religious Studies of the Russian Academy of

some tendencies and processes of destructive character, and as the main generators and sources of these is named the "negative influence of some foreign religious organizations and missionaries, cultural-religious expansion from the territory of neighboring countries, and religious extremism inside Russia".

Another interesting note: the more law-abiding the believers – representatives of the "non-traditional confessions" are, the stronger the pressure upon them is – both from the part of the authorities and the clerics, who disparages their dogma and cult practice by the press and conducts judicial inquiry of their "unlawful activity". The list of such disinformation is rather large: beginning with the accusations in confrontation with the state authorities, family destruction, disorientation of young people and ending with encouraging interconfessional hostility and violation of common morals.

An excellent example is hostile attitude of the authorities and orthodox eparchy to Jehovah's Witnesses, despite the fact that in Russia as well as in the whole world the number of adherents is not more than 0.1 per cent of the Russian population. Thus, in June, 1996, in Moscow it was taken legal proceedings against unlawful activity of Jehovah's Witnesses.⁹ The facts confirming such an activity were gathered by the Committee for Youth Rescue from Destructive Cults which was set up with the help of The Russian Orthodox Church in the middle 90s of the twentieth century. In the Committee's presentation it was stated that "the Jehovah's Witnesses – is a strong totalitarian world sect, which attracts the juvenile into the sect with mental programming, worsens hard a material position of its members' families with a strict system of fees; stirs up hatred against traditional religions, causing thus a destruction of national traditions in the youth's mind; increases the number of ruptures of family ties; foments religious and national discord; expounds the ideas of absolute superiority of some people over others; forces fear predicting "the doomsday".¹⁰ However, after long hearings in 1998 the proceeding was stopped due to the absence of evidences.

Very few Russian scientists have ventured to study the teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses, because the very mentioning of this confession even in the scientific surrounding evoked only negative response. At the same time, at the end of the last century Nickolay Gordienko – a well-known scholar, an honorable professor of the Russian State Pedagogical University, in his monograph showed the past and the

Civil Service, Moscow. By the way, clergy of the Moscow Patriarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church are receiving on regular basis a kind of "professional training" in management with this educational institution.

⁹ See, e.g.: уголовное дело, т. 1 л.д. 1-4,10 / http://www.mitropolia-spb.ru/rus/missia/juridical_doc/doc12.shtml

¹⁰ Уголовное дело т. 3 стр. 335 / http://www.mitropolia-spb.ru/rus/missia/juridical_doc/doc12.shtml

present of the confession, gave an objective characteristic of its teaching and activity, its relation to duties and everyday life. The author comes to the conclusion that "...they (i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses) are socially passive, apolitical, but law-abiding citizens of their country, respectful toward their authorities of all levels... they have been very seldom called to account for economic abuses or crimes... they are hard working, responsible to society they live in... They are very kind not only to like-believers but to the rest people".¹¹ I have come to rather similar conclusions studying the character of interaction between Christian confessions and social institutions in today's Russia. Jehovah's Witnesses themselves organized repeatedly the workshops, trying to attract there public circles and especially, representatives of the scientific world. However, all these efforts had not any success in making an image of the confession more attractive for the majority and even in some cases aroused new confrontations. New waves of protest have rolled all over the country claiming to forbid the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. In Moscow it is taken a public trial against this confession with a demand to liquidate "The Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow". The court found out that the Charter, regulating the activity of the organization, namely the Moscow Community, and its internal rules have serious disparity, which has caused infringement of the Federal Laws of Russia, the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Family Code of the RF, the Labor Code, basic Russian laws on health defense, and has resulted in broken families, infringement minors' rights, other citizens' personal rights and freedoms. That time the Committee for Youth Rescue from Destructive Cults got ready thoroughly: there were heard testimonies of victims, carried out religiological, psychological, linguistic, and other expertise. Due to clauses 194-198 of the Code of Civil Procedure of the Russian federation the court decided to liquidate the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow, to forbid its activity in the city and to make them pay for the conducted expertise and law costs in favor of the state (total amount 140.400 rubles).¹² That is the price of the struggle for the freedom of worship and religion.

We may state that in today's Russia people have much less religious freedom than there was at the beginning of the nineties of the last century, but much more than they had in the seventies or eighties. At least, nobody is put in prison for setting up a religious organization, or studying and disseminating religious literature. Universities do not pay attention to religious beliefs of applicants, and an employer does not criticize in

¹¹ Гордиенко С.Н. Российские Свидетели Иеговы: история и современность. – СПб.: Лимбус Пресс. 2000. С. 41, 104.

¹² See, for example: Радиостанция «Эхо Москвы» / <http://echo.msk.ru/news/183061.shtml>

public his workers for their religion and does not make them refuse their beliefs threatening with discharge.¹³

Nevertheless, since the middle nineties the Russian authorities create more and more artificial barriers for religious minorities, and these barriers are not always based on the valid legislation. For example, at the beginning of the 90s any solvent person could lease a building (it was a usual situation for religious organizations). At the last years non-traditional religious communities often meet with the administrative opposition. Officials explain a refusal of leasing, especially for the Protestants, saying that to conduct a divine service in a public building the community should have a permission to do so from an Orthodox clergy. And this is an obvious breach of the Constitution and the Law on Freedom of Worship and Religion (1997), which by the way is not as liberal as the one of the year 1990.

There is a religious discrimination against military-men. Moscow Patriarchate has sign special collaboration agreements with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and others. For the rest confessions such agreements remain just a theoretical possibility.¹⁴

There are also violations in such sphere of symbolic activity as participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in various solemn procedures for assumption of an office, for example, participation of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Aleksy II in president V.Putin's inauguration (1999 and 2002), participation of the Archbishop of Irkutsk and Angarsk Vadim in the ceremony of assumption of an office by the governor of the Irkutsk region A.Tishanin (September, 2005). But the mostly troublesome thing is the desire of the state to interfere with religious life by the revival of the former Soviet body – Council on Religion. At the same time, to appoint a "representative" (or as it is in many regions of the RF – an advisor of the Governor on collaboration with religious organizations) it is necessary to have a mutual free will of the government (or regional authorities) and the Patriarchate.

The results of such relations between the authorities and the church affect negatively the cultural policy of the state in the sphere of preservation of cultural and

¹³ The same infringement of rights and freedoms is rather often in today's Turkmenistan. Public insulting, threats of discharge, dismissals and even cutting off water, gas and electricity in the district where a religious meeting took place – these and others violations were reflected in "Report on Freedom of Religion in the world in 2003: Turkmenistan", released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the US Embassy In Turkmenistan (см.: <http://turkmenistan.usembassy.gov/rus/rfr03.html>).

¹⁴ Relations between the Army and the Russian Orthodox Church has been developing since March, 1994, on the base of the Joint Declaration, signed by the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia and the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. That year may be considered as a beginning of new military and church relations in post-soviet Russia.

historical monuments. Thus, in Kostroma at the end of 2004 the long proceeding on assignation of the historical-architectural museum "Ipatievsky Monastery" ' s buildings has been completed. Despite long negotiations, court sessions, and even hunger-strikes museum workers did not get church stuff, icons, and regal relics. Besides, they were told to leave the monastery in two weeks despite the fact there had not been granted a place (which had to be granted by the law) to put there not confiscated funds and unique collections. "There are a lot of claims against Kostroma's Eparchy as an owner of the most part of the exhibits. The monastery should become a place of pilgrimage as well as all famous Russian temples. But church ministers are going to organize excursions by themselves, and have already signed some agreements with tour operators for a future season".¹⁵

The recent report of the Ministry of Justice (November, 2005) states a decision to take radical actions on control strengthening over religious organizations. Specifically, it is supposed to make the order of entrance visas' issuing stricter for missionaries and the procedure of religious centers' liquidation simpler.¹⁶

Pogroms of art exhibits, the authors of which dare to speak on the Orthodox, are usual in Russia, because modern art in this country is considered to be almost a crime. Thus, in Saint Petersburg in March, 2004 orthodox fanatics attacked the exposition of "Cosmopolitic icons" by Oleg Yanushevsky.

Scientific world also becomes an object of spiritual expansion for the most influent confession in Russia. For example, in Novosibirsk, in the center of the most advanced scientific society, under the patronage of Novosibirsk Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in November, 9-11, 2004, the International Conference "Totalitarian Sects and Democratic State" was conducted, where on the part of all advanced public (religiologists, theologians, clergy, experts on sects and cults, psychologists, psychiatrists, journalists, lawyers, representatives of public organizations, state authorities, and informative centers on destructive cults, and adherents of traditional religions – citizens of different countries, people of various nationalities, beliefs and religions – 603 participants in total) it was declared that the main threat to human rights and democratic freedoms is "totalitarian destructive sects and some definite states and extremist organizations supporting them". The list of destructive cults and sects consist of more than 400 religious organizations from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The

¹⁵ See: details of the trial at the site of the company «ТВ Центр».

¹⁶ More details see.: Корня А. Духовный централизм // Ведомости. 2005. 14 ноября, № 213 (1494). [e-resource]: <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/article.shtml?2005/11/14/99429>.

result of the conference is multiple appeals of its participants to the President of the RF and the authorities of different regions of Russia concerning the impossibility of spreading the influence of totalitarian sects onto human life and a real threat to the state from the activity of the destructive cults.¹⁷

The participants of another International Conference "Neo-Pentecostal Sects in Russia: the Threat of Religious Extremism" (232 delegates in total) appealed to representatives of the state and local governments "to not give any support (even moral) to the destructive Neo-Pentecostal sects", and to remember "about the state's duty to protect its citizens from any encroachments upon their personalities, health, property and freedom". The conference was also organized by Saratov Eparchy of the ROC and Saratov State University with blessing by His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Aleksy II and with support of the Administrations of Saratov region and Saratov City.¹⁸

However, for all fairness it should be noted that the situation with religious freedom is not so sad and hopeless comparing different regions of Russia, for there are single instances when local authorities do something for religious freedom and kind relations between traditional and non-traditional, large and small confessions.

3 The Roots of the Problem

The developed situation is caused by a complex of reasons including historical, political, sociocultural and economic ones. In the field of religious relations in Russia different stakeholders' interests have met – the Government, the Orthodox church, "traditional" religions of Russia and "non-traditional" religious organizations, public organizations on human rights defending – each of them has its own specific aims.

The Government of the RF now is eager to find the so called "national idea" for Russia. The power vertical is strengthen constantly – since the beginning of 2005 governors are appointed by the Kremlin, regions are getting larger, political groups of opposition are gradually brought back to the outline of public life, independent press becomes more and more dependent, and so on. However, "power comes from the above, but legitimacy appears from the bottom" (M.Weber), that is why Russian authorities looks so urgently for any ideological construction applicable for the society in

¹⁷ Full text of the Declaration and the Conference participants' appeals see http://www.mitropolia-spb.ru/rus/missia/juridical_doc/Novosibirsk_9_11_04.shtml.

¹⁸ See: http://www.mitropolia-spb.ru/rus/missia/juridical_doc/doc16.shtml.

the whole and which could have included all authoritative trends and doubtful reforms, making them legitimate.

All these searches of national ideology, beginning from Yeltsin and ending with Putin, reflected inevitably the most urgent interest of the authorities – national ideology should strengthen their governmental position, the position of the almighty Russian state bureaucracy.

During the transformation period it is not possible to keep for a long time dynamic balance among all life systems. The tension between various strata of society is getting stronger. Even at the level of vital practice considerable contradictions appear, causing conflicts and struggle, which turns into mass clashes of opposite interests by ethnic, religious, political, cultural and other indications

The project of creating "megaideology of superimperia", which is discussed very seriously now in the scientific world, seems to be no more than an illusion. Such efforts "to embrace the boundless" putting together all polar and unequal in their strength fragments cannot bring any positive results. But one of possible ideological dominants is to play the most important part in upswing of the Russian culture and economics, and the rest ones, if favorable circumstances, are just to support the processes of stabilization.

Let's explain why. Liberal-democratic ideology, formed during the last 10-15 years as a set of spread west ideals of "financial capitalism", "freedom of human rights" and "freedom of worship", is in fact the idea of serving to personal interests and to wishes of an individual by the principle "Everyone is for oneself, not violating the society's rules". However in Russia this principle of "social synergism", accepted scrupulously by the economically mobile sphere of businessmen, industry owners and politicians, is just an appendix of permanent social deviation – the artificial selection of the strongest ones (not for one's mind and virtues but for slyness and physical strength). It turns into philosophy of permissiveness, quasi-egalitarian cover – "benefit for all wishing" with a proviso of "a weak section". Social minority of proprietors, grown rich in the new environment, turned out to be unable to establish steady social contacts and to acquire cultural skills, and this has reflected on people's prosperity.

It is not surprising that for the most Russian people with their historically formed collective mentality, communal and emergency character of production it turned out to be impossible "to strike while the iron is hot all alone". New norms and rules showed their contradiction and isolation from the developed schemes of regulations and controls after people behavior. Social justice has been changed with social freedom, but there

was not enough time to learn how to use it. That is why the reforms of transformations of institutes in the western way, based on rational choice when norms are considered as limitations and stimulus to choice, failed.

The reformation of social institutions goes from the top, i.e. it is connected with the activity of the authorities who are too far from people to let democratic society develop. Misunderstanding the traditions of western liberalism the authorities excuse themselves from the responsibility for those social-economic and social-political processes, which need considerable payments and active support. Monetization of benefits, transference of social payments to the regions' responsibility, centralized appointment of regional governors – it is only a surface part of the coming authoritarianism in Russia.

The main postulate of the state policy - exemption from paternal directives and state control of almost all life systems – caused strong social-economic difference among the people. While there is rather a dynamic growth of benefits of some population groups, occupied mostly in the competitive spheres of economics, real profits of the population fall generally, despite annual growth of a minimal wage.

The democracy of our "quasi-democratic" country influences badly the system of moral and ideological values of Russian citizens, institutes of religion, family and education. Policy institutes, including parties and organizations, manipulate skillfully public conciseness with the quasi-selective system.

If basic values are reduced, values satisfying demands of safety, social ties, self-respect, and if leaders of public opinions, bearers of "cultural symbolic capital", are not protected from devaluation, it results not only in stagnation in various spheres of human life.

Now it is necessary to say a few words on imperial-orthodox determinant, which seizes public opinion. Not only the ability of Russian people to adapt radical changes (ideological and religious-atheistic pendulum of years 1905, 1917, 1943, 1991) is very remarkable, but it is also very interesting that in Russia the peak of religiousness always coincides with deep moral regress of the people.

The Russian Orthodox Church more and more incorporates basic socially important institutes (of family and education), and in the nearest future it can become a norm forming authority and start forming ideological and moral orientations as it was in the Middle Ages. In this case we may predict active sacralization and reduction of the role of science, culture, art, education as the basic translators of the values. The sign of it is a document "Bases of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church", passed in 2000, in which a wide range of collaboration between the Church and the State is drawn in the

sphere of education and culture. Whether this “unite of God and Caesar” serve to public use we may judge by historical facts of such relations, beginning from the violent baptism at the end of the 10th century, mass self-immolations of the Old-Believers, caused by radical church reformations, but mostly by the punitive actions of the tsarist power (the 17th century), and ending with dramatic events of the 20th century.

For its long history the Church still has failed to make a tough ideological-moral system. Besides, it has failed to instill the proper respect to the holy bible precepts and to the saints’ deeds into its flock, and, more important, to root these precepts and patterns of virtue into the life norm. The Church has failed to make its people know well all religious dogmas, rites and services, and moreover they adhere to these high moral norms in their everyday life.

When analyze mass polls, conducted in the country to find out the citizens’ moral and material condition, we come to the conclusion that the majority wills the Soviet system come back, meaning it will bring back social justice – the state system of social guarantees in the sphere of security, labor, free education and medicine.

Thus in August, 2003, “Regions.Ru” polled the visitors of the site on the theme “Orthodoxy in Russia and Abroad”. Answers to the question about the necessity for the Orthodox Church to have a special status in Russia demonstrate clearly the existence of certain serious ideological disagreements in the Russian society. Almost the half of the respondents (42%) holds on the modern liberal values: “we have a secular state, so all religions should have equal rights”. The number of those thinking the state must see the difference between Orthodoxy and other cults not relative to Russia’s history was a little larger. 29% of respondents thought Russia should be an Orthodox country, and the other 20% - that Orthodoxy might share its status only with the traditional religions. There were only 3% of militant atheists thinking that any religion must be restricted.

Another question was devoted to the theme very popular in the press: “What is your opinion on kids’ studying “The Bases of the Orthodox Culture” in school”? The public divided almost in two equal parts. 49% of the respondents said they supported the idea. Besides, 33% of people thought, interested kids might study Orthodoxy in Sunday schools, and 12% stayed at the position of militant atheism, saying it was no good in propaganda of “cleric obscurantism”.

The next question was about the consequences of studying this subject in schools. The supporters of “The Bases of the Orthodox Culture” thought that studying this subject would bring about rising the level of spirituality and culture (35%), appearance of the first moral generation in Russia (6%), and even revival of Russia’s former grandeur

(5%). 3% of the respondents supposed that political and economic position of the ROC would strengthen (it might have been said by both adherents and opponents of studying Orthodoxy in schools).

39% of respondents were very pessimistic about the problem in discussion. They foretold the split of the society by the religious feature (17%), persecution of dissidents (9%), decadence of science and culture (6%), and as a reaction to the compulsory introduction of the religion – splash of atheism among the youth (7%).

The Communist idea of unity, equality, brotherhood and benevolence is the nearest to the expression of the Russian mentality, and the evidences of this are unremitting spirit of collectivism, the majority's interest to collective activity. Besides, Russian open nature transforming into internationalism does not contradict Christian egalitarian teaching on the eternal "high values" – love, brotherhood and equality. Maybe just because of it Protestant organizations had such a success at the beginning of the 90s of the last century, spreading quickly all around the territory of the former Soviet Union, and still keep their influence nowadays.

The government of the post-soviet Russia has practically copied ideal principles of interactions between the state and the religion, realized during the Soviet period, having changed the ideology of "militant atheism" with the idea of "turning all people into Orthodoxy". At the level of the highest representative power law drafts are discussed which infringe directly or indirectly the legitimate rights of not only small confessions, but traditional for Russia religious organizations (Catholic and Protestant). From the beginning of the 3rd millennium the State Duma constantly discusses projects of appeals to the President of Russia on prohibition of the activity of those confessions threatening the integrity of the RF and spiritual health of the citizens. On April, 17, 2002 Duma discussed such a question "On Appealing of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the RF to the President of the Russian Federation V.Putin about the activity of the Roman-Catholic Church at the territory of the RF".¹⁹ In 2001 the State Duma considered amendments to the active Law on Religion (1997). 300 of them contradicted the Constitution of the Russian Federation: introduction of the term "traditional religion", more attention to the traditional for the given region religions, regulations of the activity of religious organizations in schools and kindergartens, control after the activity of religious groups, requirement of being not less than 3 local religious organizations to make a centralized religious organization, and from 10 to 45 (50) founders of a local

¹⁹ See: РИА «Новости» от 16 апреля 2002 г.

religious organization. It becomes a tradition for the State Duma to invite prominent representatives of the ROC to take part in the discussions on the theme “Problems of legislative Support of the Relations between the State and the Church in the light of Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church”.²⁰

The ROC regularly consecrates state buildings, techniques, cars and different social events. For example, in Yekaterinburg the Archbishop of Yekaterinburg and Verchotur Vikenty in 2001 with the invitation of the authorities consecrated buildings of the Ministry of Taxation of Sverdlovsk region. In April, 2004, Moscow Patriarchate considered a question of the State Duma building’s consecration, and the rooms of many orthodox deputies had already been consecrated by their requests.²¹ Now the ROC’s representatives wait for a request from the leaders of the State Duma. In October, 2005, the consecration of the fire-brigades of the regional center was conducted.²²

In reality today we watch the realization of a new strategic project of a new Russian bourgeoisie and its bureaucratic state apparatus which consists of giving the Orthodox Church the right to fill, at least partially, “the spiritual vacuum” after the falling of the Soviet ideology. But to take the spiritual education in its hands it is necessary to make Orthodoxy a basis of morality, the ideological base of education in the country. For this aim the Church collaborated with the scientific world. The result was a letter by the Patriarch Aleksy II, president of the Russian Academy of Sciences Y.Osipov, President of the Russian Academy of Education N.Nikandrov, head of the Moscow State University V.Sadovnichev, sent to the Minister of Education V.Filippov in January, 1999. In that letter scientists, well-known all over the world, glorified the Church’s services to history and country, criticized “Soviet atheism” and atheistic “democratic ideas”, and insisted on religious education in secondary and high school. Among the general directions for public schools are: including “religion oriented subjects” (basics of Orthodox culture, theology) into the list of the obligatory ones; introducing new specializations (history of Christian teachings, history and theory of Christian art, Orthodox theology, theology of Islam, Buddhism, Judaism). In fact, the Minister had got a strict instruction which was brought into the life.

Thus, today in Russia there is an inevitable process of fusing the state (its authorities or some parts of them) and the Church (the Patriarchate or regional

²⁰ See: Коммерсантъ от 9 июля 2001 г.

²¹ See: РИА «Новости» от 15 апреля 2004 г.

²² See: <http://www.pobeda.ru/duhovenstvo/kemerovo.html>

eparchies), which is reflected both at the state policy in the whole, reducing it to monopoly ideological control after dissidents (the analogy after the state structure of the soviet Russia), and the functional content of the activity of social institutes (political, economic, educational, cultural and religious), as well as spiritual health of citizens.

It is necessary to note that the principles of the freedom of worship, equality of religions, and independence from the state can be ensured only when there is a democratic state and public system. And constructive and integrative functions of the most important social institutes cannot be realized through the submission of the Church by the State or absorption of the State by the Church (i.e. when the Church acquires *de jure* or *de facto* state status as a single and obligatory religion).

4 Policy Recommendations

Russia for many centuries has been a polycultural and polyreligious country, and it has met intercultural and interconfessional problems deciding them by law or by heart. Today it still remains very important to keep civil peace, to create prerequisites of civil initiatives for preventing ethnic and religious intolerance.

The Russian Federation inherited a lot of insoluble problems; the state authorities did not propose any clear and convincing projects of planned education of religious tolerance. This has given birth to many public movements, based on the ideas of xenophobia and chauvinism, which begin influence more persistently some structures of the state power, co-governing in this way. Such connivance of the state power and sometimes even encouragement of the religious fanaticism may lead to irretrievable consequences.

Russia is in a rather difficult situation concerning the freedom of worship. Foreign experts put it in the list of countries with "the discriminating legislation or preconceived policy which causes detriment to certain religions, though the government's activities are in accordance with the Constitution".²³

In this connection, it is necessary to elaborate recommendations for the authorities to conduct state social policy not contradicting the Constitutions, international rights and freedoms, and for members of the Russian Orthodox Church, for "traditional" and "non-traditional" confessions acting in Russia to overcome negative results of national and religious intolerance.

For the Executive and Legislative Authorities of the Russian Federation:

- First of all, it is necessary to prove the unity of the state by curbing the religious (orthodox) fundamentalism through the key spheres – religious tolerance and social values.
- The analysis of the legislation shows a serious disparity between it and the real situation at the religious sphere. So, it needs to change the existing norms provoking the discrimination between confessions or on the basis of their "traditionalism – non-traditionalism".
- All around Russia in every social institute (family, educational establishment and so on) to declare secular values, based on the principles of freedom and equality. It concerns especially the institutes of socializations and interiorisation of the rising generation. We need to stop the joining of the state and the church, and the church with school, because religious world viewing with its mystique and myths is not combined with the scientific knowledge.
- The purpose of such education is to acquaint people with religions of Russia and neighboring states to help them to realize that all people have an equal right to believe in the verity of their religion, and that other people, different by their confessions, are actually just the same human beings.

For the Russian Orthodox Church (the ROC):

- In Russia the Orthodox fundamentalism is the most dangerous. It takes the political forms of archaic and extreme content and can change the whole political culture, therefore, the ideology of the state social policy.
- As far as the ROC is the most influent power in today's Russian social and political situation, it is very important whether it will be able to overcome its own ambitions and to put a line between the Church and Fundamentalism, not falling into the "political sectarianism".
- The ROC must declare in public open attitude of the Church to the modern society, free from any chauvinistic reminiscent.

For all other confessions acting in Russia:

- As long as many confessions have rather wide judicial practice (due to often trials) including international experience (by foreign missionaries) it is necessary to participate in development of the legislative initiatives, directed to bringing the Russian legislation to the highest European and world standards in the sphere of freedom of worship, and to monitor regularly law drafts and international pacts of Russia.

²³ See: <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2005/11/09/493601.shtml>

Appendix

The level of religious intolerance in Russia (according to the content-analysis of the Russian media). The time span: 2000-2006.

